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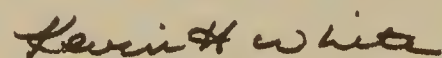
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BACK RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Back Bay is one of the most distinguished areas of urban architecture in the United States. Its survival as a handsome Victorian neighborhood provides Boston with a unique opportunity for contemporary living. Although changes for modern residential use are necessary, the architectural character of the area and its Victorian plan can be maintained and enhanced if the rehabilitation process is carefully supervised.

The publication of these guidelines by the Back Bay Architectural Commission will contribute considerably to the rehabilitation, restoration and appropriate development of the Residential District.

The physical rejuvenation of an older and architecturally notable neighborhood is an ambitious undertaking. The Back Bay Architectural Commission is to be congratulated for this excellent beginning. I wish them every success. The future of the Back Bay Residential District will be guided by their good judgment and direction.

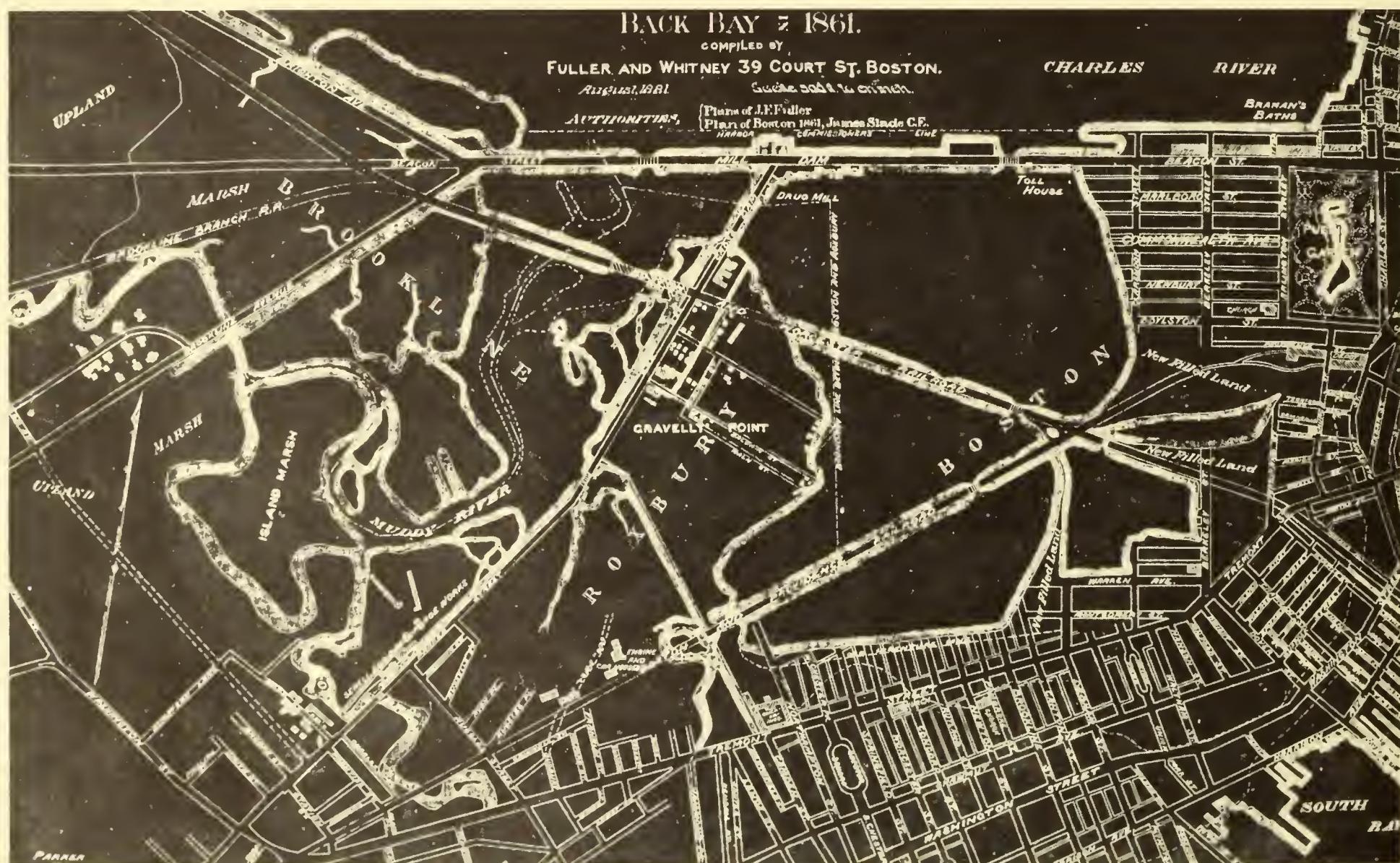


KEVIN H. WHITE
Mayor

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The Back Bay in 1858.



Blueprint plan of the Back Bay in 1861.

TOPOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

The Back Bay, Boston's elegant residential district, was originally a broad shallow body of water located beyond the south-western shoreline of the old Boston peninsula. The bay separated Boston from Brookline and bordered the narrow neck of land access to Roxbury in the vicinity of the present South End. Until the creation of the Public Garden, the marshes of the Back Bay reached Boston Common, and Charles Street served as a thoroughfare at the water's edge.

Development of the Back Bay was initiated in 1814 when the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation proposed a scheme to harness its tidal flow for commercial purposes. A granite-faced mill dam completed in 1821 stretched across the bay from Charles Street to Sewall's Point *now Kenmore Square* along a route corresponding to the present Beacon Street. A shorter cross-dam projecting from Roxbury intersected the mill dam and divided the Back Bay into full and receiving basins. The mill dam project however, was soon forced to compete with steam powered manufacturing and never became the financial success envisioned by its promoters. Railroad lines built on trestles across the dammed basins in the 1830's further frustrated industrial development by impeding the flow of water in the bay. By 1849, stagnating Back Bay waters produced such an unhealthy and offensive sewerage problem that city health officials demanded that the area be filled in the interests of the public welfare.

In 1852, a special commission was appointed by the state legislature to prepare a plan for the development of the Back Bay. Because of difficulties in resolving conflicting claims to ownership, a delay of several years blocked the immediate filling of the area. Prolonged negotiations resulted in the Tripartite Agreement of 1856 which divided the proposed lands among the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation, the Boston Water Power Company *a subsidiary of the Mill Corporation*, and the Commonwealth. To satisfy Boston's claims, two and a half acres were donated to the City from the Commonwealth's share for an addition to the existing Public Garden.

The filling of the Back Bay began in September 1857. Since the hills of the city, earlier a frequent source of land fill, had been completely developed by the 1850's, gravel had to be brought into the area from the town of Needham by a specially constructed railroad line. By 1860, the Back Bay had been filled as far west as Clarendon Street; by 1870, the fill had reached Exeter Street; by 1880, the entire area now known as the Back Bay District was solid ground; and by 1890, the fill extended beyond Kenmore Square and was continuing along Bay State Road. At its completion, the monumental Back Bay project had added 450 acres of new land to the City of Boston.

The plan for the Back Bay District, attributed to the Boston architect Arthur Gilman, was very much influenced in its street forms by the impressive Parisian boulevards of Second Empire France. Unlike earlier residential plans for Beacon Hill or the South End, the Back Bay was not divided into tree-lined squares inspired by Georgian London, but was conceived as a grand scheme of generously landscaped parallel avenues. Commonwealth Avenue, designed as the dominant boulevard of the area, provided the district with a central linear park and served to connect the green open spaces of the Common and Public Garden with those of the Fenway system.

From its inception, the development of the Back Bay was planned both as a major civic improvement and as a substantial residential district. Its impressive plan of spacious streets and appealing location soon attracted many of the city's leading families. The handsome town houses and splendid mansions that began to line the streets of the district were designed by prominent local architects and reflected the tastes of a fashionable and affluent clientele.

Despite many variations in architectural style, the Back Bay developed as an area distinguished by a general consistency of character, form, and scale. This architectural unity, determined for the most part by the linear boulevard plan which subordinated individual town houses to the design of the street, was strongly encouraged by the original and far-sighted deed restrictions imposed upon Back Bay construction. These restrictions specified minimum building heights, established a system of generous setbacks on all major streets, and called for masonry construction. The mandatory building setbacks coupled with later limitations on mass assured the development of a continuous street facade, regular cornice and mansard roof lines, and a repetitive pattern of projecting oriel and bay windows.



Commonwealth Avenue looking east from Dartmouth Street. 1879.



Commonwealth Avenue looking east from Berkeley Street.



Commonwealth Avenue looking west from Exeter Street.

BACK BAY ARCHITECTURE

The residential development of the Back Bay reflects four distinct phases of Victorian architecture. During the late 1850's and 1860's, building design was influenced, as were the boulevard forms of the district, by Second Empire France. The cosmopolitan French style dominates the easterly blocks of the Back Bay and is readily identified by the presence of the mansard roof and brownstone masonry. Second Empire town houses are generally tall and narrow in proportion and are characterized by sculptural window and door enframements, formal entries, heavy protruding cornices, and stringcourse bands set between floors. Frequently arranged into monumental pavilion-plan units, Second Empire buildings create a grandeur of scale reminiscent of the impressive blocks of apartments that line the boulevards of Paris.

Although the French Second Empire style continued to be influential during the 1870's, various stylistic modifications produced a second period of Back Bay architecture. This stylistic development included an ornamental treatment of French architectural detail and a decided

return to brick masonry. Building masses are more freely arranged, and lively brickwork patterns decorate cornices, window enframements, and chimney ends. The Ruskin Gothic style, which also emerged during this period, is distinguished by its polychrome masonry, brickwork ornament, and medieval detailing described by steep gables, pointed arches, and tower-like roof projections.

By the late 1870's, Back Bay architecture entered a third phase which was defined by two styles each characterized by picturesque compositions and a sensitive manipulation of building materials. The first of these, the Queen Anne style, is influenced by several English architectural sources and displays brickwork plaques of foliate, floral, or sunburst patterns, fancifully shaped dormer windows, stepped Dutch gables, and numerous tall chimney stacks. The other, the Romanesque Revival, introduced to the Back Bay by H. H. Richardson, is characterized by broad masonry arches, roughly textured walls, slit-like openings, bundles of thick colonnettes, and somber contrasts of red brick and rusticated brownstone.

The final period of Victorian architecture in the Back Bay is dependent upon a meticulous reference to earlier building styles. "Authentic" revivals of several venerable models including Italian Renaissance, English and American Georgian, and French Chateausque architecture became popular and distinguish late nineteenth and early twentieth century construction in the Back Bay from previous periods of development.

White limestone and granite, considered to be most appropriate for monumental Classical and Renaissance-derived styles, became predominant in the district at this time. The most popular of the "authentic" styles, however, referred back to the early nineteenth century red brick architecture of Charles Bulfinch. This Federal Revival style survived in the Back Bay for decades, and its strong influence is apparent in the design of several large-scale apartment houses built as late as the 1920's and 1930's.



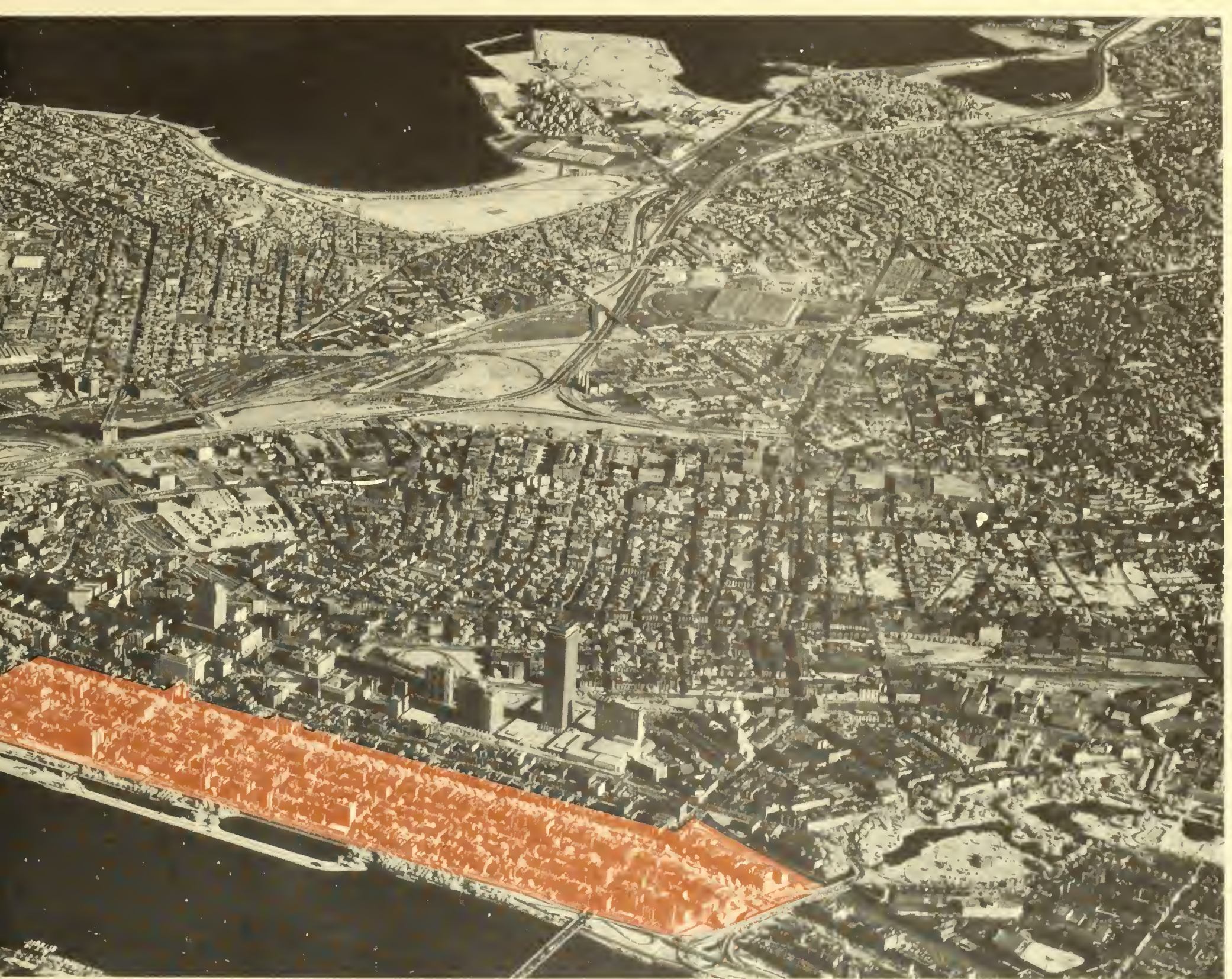
THE BACK BAY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT / BACK BAY ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSION

It has long been acknowledged that the development of the Back Bay as a substantial and architecturally distinguished residential area was in large part determined by the architectural controls placed on the "new lands" as they were built up. In addition to these controls, the original restrictions against incompatible uses of land, more recently replaced by zoning, have protected sizeable sections of the area against commercial and business encroachment.

If those portions of the Back Bay that have retained their nineteenth century character are to be preserved and appropriately maintained, formative development controls must be continued and revitalized. As an outgrowth of the objectives of the Back Bay Development Plan and with the active support of several civic groups, an Act *Chapter 625 of the Acts of 1966* was passed by the State Legislature establishing the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission, a board of

design review within the Boston Redevelopment Authority. As designated by the legislation, the Residential District is bounded by Back Street on the north, by Embankment Road and Arlington Street on the east, by the alleyway between Commonwealth Avenue and Newbury Street on the south, and by Charlesgate East on the west.

The purpose of the Act is to encourage architectural preservation and high design



Aerial photograph *Aerial photos of New England*

standards in the Back Bay Residential District, to insure the compatibility of rehabilitation efforts and development activity with existing street forms and building patterns, to stabilize and strengthen residential property values in the area, and "to safeguard the heritage of the City by preventing the despoilation of a district which reflects important elements of its cultural, social, economic, and political history".

The Back Bay Architectural Commission is comprised of five members and five alternates nominated by the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, the Boston Society of Architects, the Back Bay Association, and the Mayor, respectively. All plans for new construction, demolition, exterior rehabilitation and repair of existing buildings, as well as all proposals concerning the erection of signs,

awnings, and other features appurtenant to structures in the Residential District, must be submitted to the Commission for review and consideration. In passing upon any design or alteration, the Commission will study the proposed forms, the arrangements, relationships, materials, and colors of exterior architectural features, landscape elements, and any aesthetic or other factor thought to be pertinent.

GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION



ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The architectural character of the Back Bay Residential District is determined by an extensive complex of masonry buildings of similar form, scale, proportion, color, and texture. Although variations do exist, the traditional Back Bay town house is constructed of red brick or brownstone, is three to five stories high, is placed perpendicularly to the street, is attached on both sides, is set back 20-22 feet from the front property line, and is usually crowned with a mansard roof.

The Back Bay town house is generally designed as a narrow (18-25 feet wide) rectangular form with flat facades enlivened by projecting elements including bay windows, oriels, porches, stairways, balconies, cornices, and door and window enframements. The main elevation of the Back Bay residence is divided into well-defined levels of basement, upper floors, cornice and/or roof, and long narrow facade openings are typically arranged within strict grid-like rows. Entrances and accompanying porches are set above a low basement or placed at grade level. Ornament and architectural detailing emphasize the structural organization of the facade.

In the Back Bay, individual structures are subordinated to the avenue plan of the district. The continuity of this plan is the dominant design factor of the area, and unbroken walls of masonry construction are formed from the constant alignment of the separate residences and their repetitive landscaping, regular cornice lines, building heights, and window and floor levels. Interruptions in street corridor walls occur only at cross street intersections and are not generally apparent along avenue frontages. The architecture of the Residential District is restrained and dignified, and few buildings are visually prominent either through flamboyance of style, irregularity of form, or marked differentiation of materials.

Despite the dominance of the long avenues, notable buildings were constructed on all four sides of the typical Back Bay street block. Elegant town houses and mansions frequently face the shorter east-west streets, and side street eleva-



Beacon Street looking west from Embankment Road.

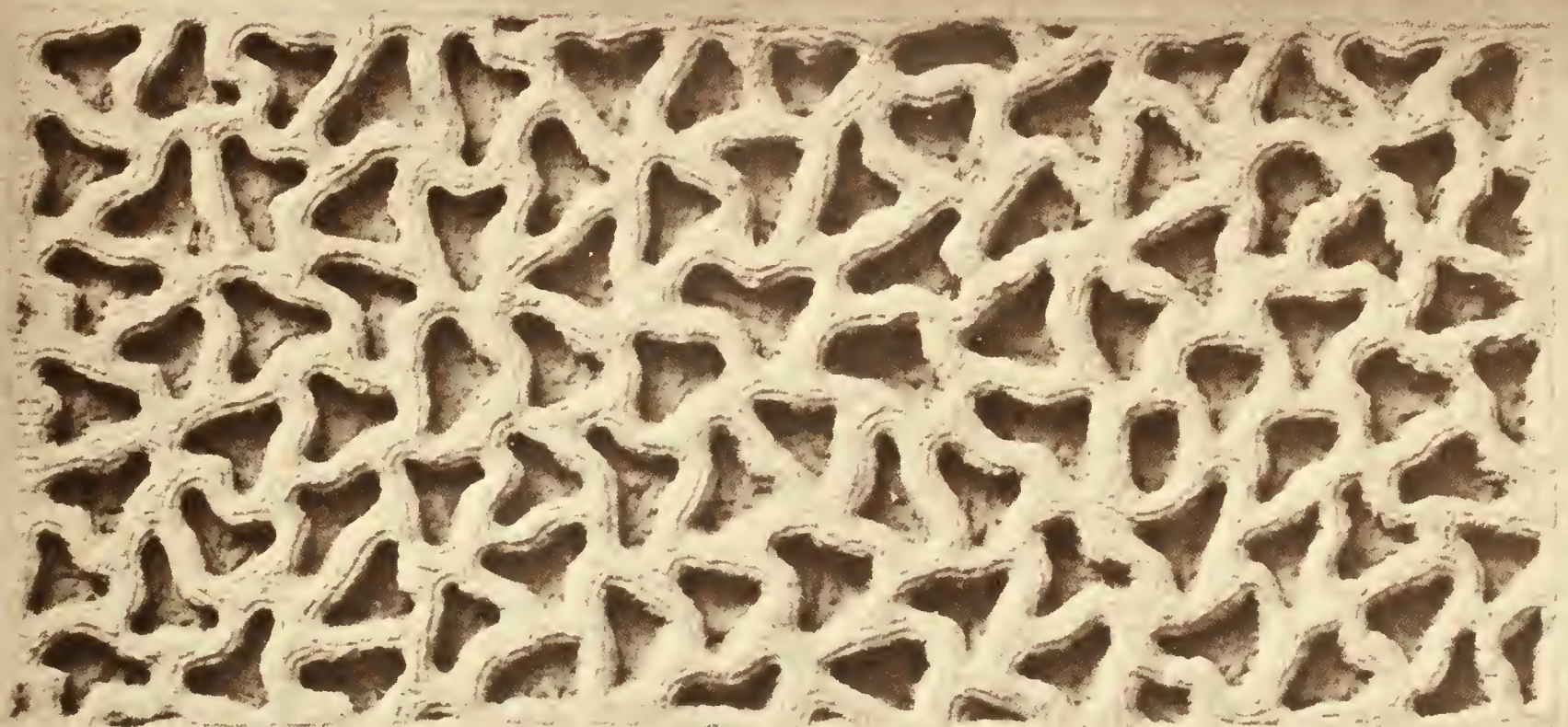
tions of corner buildings are often elaborately designed. Monumental structures, including most of the churches of the district, occupy corner lots and, with few exceptions, are carefully aligned with cross street as well as avenue frontages.

It is to these traditional architectural forms that all proposed rehabilitation, restoration, and new development must relate if the distinctive character of the Residential District is to be preserved. Existing older forms in the area provide models for appropriate exterior rehabilitation and suggest the basic design framework for new construction.

Rehabilitation efforts and proposed development must respect the design fabric of the district and may not alter its present architectural integrity. Design elements that are not compatible with the architectural character of the area, a street facade, or an individual structure, will not be approved by the Back Bay Architectural Commission. Appropriate restoration, rehabilitation, and new development in the Residential District must protect and complement design concepts that now distinguish the area. Traditional building forms and materials must be respected and characteristic features including proportional relationships, facade compositions, and textural qualities maintained or restored.



MASONRY





Garden wall, 284 Commonwealth Avenue.

One of the most significant architectural changes to accompany the development of the Back Bay was a new interest in stone masonry construction for residential buildings. Many of the early French Second Empire residences erected in the area were built with brownstone quarried in the Connecticut Valley or with a smoother cream colored sandstone transported by barge from Nova Scotia. Brownstone and sandstone could be easily carved, and were therefore specified by Victorian architects for their richly shadowed and elegantly detailed buildings.

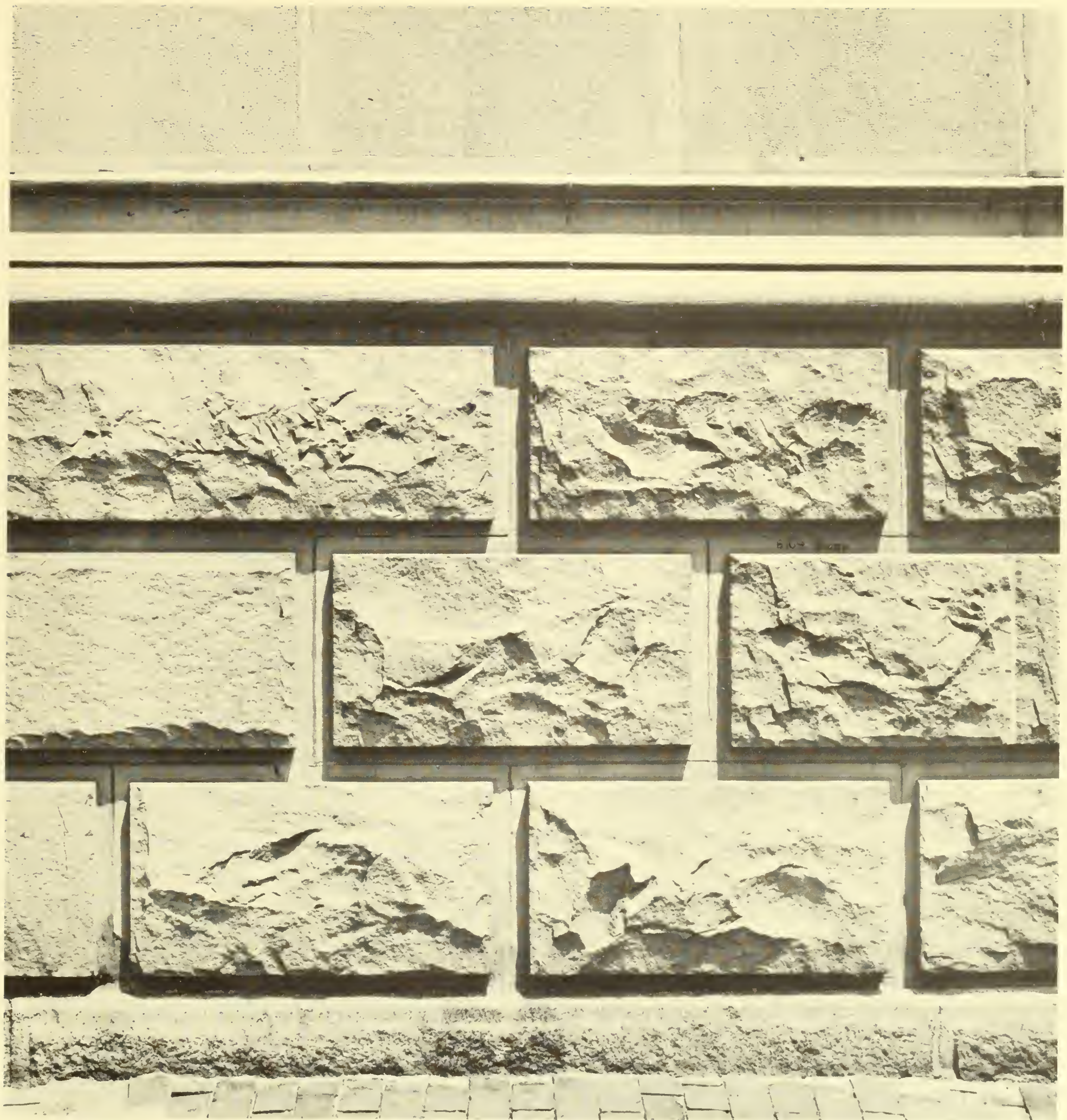
In spite of a considerable use of brown-

stone masonry, the most popular building material in the Back Bay was the traditional reddish-orange Philadelphia pressed brick. Pressed brick is vivid in color, smooth in texture, and in the Back Bay, often combined with sandstone or brownstone basements, steps, porches, and door and window enframements. Brickwork ornament, one of the delights of the area, included the use of a variety of brick shapes that were projected from and set at angles to the surface of the exterior wall creating a lively series of decorative bands and panels.

By the mid 1880's, the red brick and brownstone architecture of the Back Bay

was complemented by building construction in buff and brown brick and light colored limestone and granite. At this time, brownstone was used in a rough-faced form which is particularly effective when contrasted with smooth flat walls of red pressed brick. The only other building stone prominent in the Back Bay is the mottled orange Roxbury puddingstone which was quarried locally and primarily used in church construction.

REPAIR All masonry used in Back Bay construction weathers well and requires relatively little maintenance except brownstone. Considerable skill is required to patch and repair this stone and, therefore,



only the very best contractors specializing in masonry restoration should be retained.

In the repair of brownstone, strong efforts must be made to preserve as much of the carved surfaces, mouldings, enframements, and cornices as is feasible. Severely flaked brownstone surfaces should be carefully removed and refaced. If properly used, a mixture of portland cement and sand colored to match the existing masonry can serve as an effective medium of repair. Carved profiles and mouldings requiring removal should be rebuilt, and restoration of distinctive surface qualities and textures undertaken in the repair medium. If attempts to match older masonry colors have been unsuccessful and repaired brownstone is mottled in appearance, appropriate painting of the building and/or its brownstone trim should be considered.

CLEANING Cleaning should be undertaken if the appearance of a building is substantially affected by dirt or staining. In most instances, brick and stone masonry in the Residential District should be steam cleaned. Encrusted dirt may, however, necessitate the use of water under controlled pressures or water and fine sand used in combination. Because they are very soft and porous, these latter methods should not be attempted on brownstone or sandstone without previous testing.

Cleaning by sandblasting is generally unnecessary in the Residential District. Although sandblasting may be recommended to remove paint from masonry buildings (*never* brownstone or sandstone), this should not be considered until it can be determined that no damage to the brick or stone surfaces will result. It may, in fact, be preferable to repaint a building a suitable masonry color than to subject the structure to an abrasive cleaning which might permanently impair its texture and detailing. Stains like those under copper down-spouts or fire escapes may require chemical treatment; this process should be carefully supervised by an experienced contractor.

After cleaning, masonry buildings may be protected against the effects of weathering and dirt accumulation by waterproofing with silicones.

REPOINTING Much of the red brick masonry in the Back Bay was laid up with a dark toned brown mortar. Joints are narrow *about 1/8 of an inch* and are deeply raked (*recessed*) into the wall surface. Brownstone, sandstone, limestone, and granite were generally pointed with mortar approximating their natural colors, although a thickly applied reddish mortar is characteristic of the rough-faced stone masonry of Romanesque Revival architecture.

In repointing masonry, one should strive for an inconspicuous appearance. Mortar can easily be colored to match that of the original construction, and joints should be raked, tooled, scored or otherwise treated in order to imitate older wall surfaces.

REFACING Original masonry in the Residential District should, wherever feasible, be repaired, cleaned, or repointed rather than refaced. Small areas of masonry that may need replacement should be filled either with old materials from rear garden walls or salvage yards, or refaced with modern substitutes treated to match original construction. Masonry work in the area may not, under any circumstances, be replaced by or covered with synthetic brick or stone, shingling, clapboards, aluminum siding, or any other material that does not provide or recreate a surface similar to that of the older walls.

PRESERVATIVES -SILICONES Deterioration of brick and stone surfaces can be abated through the application of silicones and other recently developed waterproofing preservatives. Silicones are invisible and produce a chemical bond that protects masonry walls from moisture and soot. The application of silicones requires the advice and supervision of a waterproofing expert and should be undertaken after a building has been cleaned or repaired. The preservative effects of silicones will last for several years.

-PAINTS Although paint can also function as a preservative, painted masonry is not generally recommended for the Back Bay Residential District. In certain instances, however, paint may be successfully used on brownstone or sandstone.

Painting will provide some protection against the characteristic spalling and erosion of brownstone and may considerably improve the appearance of a severely blackened building that cannot be safely cleaned. Unfortunately, paint cannot be removed from brownstone surfaces without considerable damage to the masonry, and consequently, painted brownstone or sandstone must be maintained as such indefinitely.

Acrylic latex house paints are best for use on brownstone and sandstone. This paint produces a matte finish and contains no oil base ingredients to react against masonry pointing. All repair and repointing should be completed before painting begins, and deposits of dirt or powdered stone should be brushed off walls and ornamented surfaces. Pigeon deterrents like wire mesh or steel nails should be permanently removed and replaced, after painting, by periodic applications of liquid repellents.

Selected paints should approximate the natural color of brownstone masonry. If desired, this color may be lightened or softened, but the appearance of the building should never be drastically altered. Effective treatment of pairs or groups of buildings designed as a block can be achieved through mutual agreements by the various property owners to paint their buildings at the same time with the same paint. Sharing of contracting services to complete this task will not only enhance the impressive quality of a block of houses but will result in reduced costs for the individual property owner.

In those instances in which brownstone is used only as trim, and painting is proposed, all of the stone masonry of the building, including the front steps, porch, basement, cornice, and door and window enframements should be painted the same natural stone color. The elegant proportions of a building are seriously altered if some parts of the structure are painted and others left untouched or are completed in different shades. Because the design of many buildings in the Back Bay is dependent upon the contrast of red brick and brownstone masonry, this range of color should be maintained in the painting process.



ENTRANCES

The entrance to the Back Bay town house customarily includes the following architectural features: front steps, a projecting porch or recessed vestibule, the doorway, and an accompanying complex of masonry ornament, ironwork, and wood panelling. Because of the diversity of architectural styles in the district, Back Bay entrances occur in various forms. Although they are generally designed as graceful arched openings set above a low basement, entrances may be placed at street level, and may include a monumental porch of free-standing columns or a massive portal with ornately carved door jambs.

If the entrance to a Back Bay residence is to remain the impressive feature that it was originally designed to be, it must be maintained and repaired with considerable care. Inappropriate alterations to any of the parts associated with the entrance will substantially affect the appearance of the building and can impair the unity of an entire street facade.

PORCHES In its earliest form, the entry porch in the Residential District is often set above a high or modest flight of steps and is either supported by tall free-standing columns or designed as a classically detailed archway. By the late 1870's, porches become broadly arched dark enclosures and are characterized by their massive proportions and asymmetrically arranged stairs. Residences of the 1890's and the period of the historic revivals are usually distinguished by formal ground level entry porches flanked by columns or framed with panels of Classical and Renaissance inspired ornament.

Because of their great beauty and architectural prominence, entry porches should be kept in good repair and maintained in unaltered form. To prevent obliteration of carved details, mouldings, and textured surfaces, particular care must be taken whenever brownstone or brownstone trimmed porches require patching. Porches should not be removed or enclosed as these major alterations will destroy the design of the building and will eliminate one of the characteristic features of Back Bay architecture.



191 Marlborough Street.

DOORS The original doors of the Back Bay residence are made of fine woods, are handsomely panelled and occasionally adorned with ornate hardware and grillwork. Old doors should be restored to deep toned wood finishes, but matte black and muted browns, greens, greys, and ochre paint colors are acceptable alternatives.

As a fine ornament and notable architectural feature, every effort should be made to retain and repair original doors in

the Back Bay Residential District. Unless unsalvageable, old doors must not be discarded. If removal is required, replacement doors of panelled wood that maintain the tall proportions and form of the originals should be installed. The french door, a symmetrical double door opening at the center, is often appropriate and if desired, may be fitted with symmetrically placed full-length glass insets. Wherever possible, transoms and sidelights should be retained intact.



Inappropriate to the Victorian architecture of the Residential District are aluminum doors, storm doors, slab doors, doors that reduce the height of the entry, and those that are asymmetrically divided, or made with textured glass, plastic panels, or colored insets.

FRONT STEPS The front steps of the Back Bay town house are constructed of brownstone, sandstone, limestone, or granite. Patching or sealing of the front steps, when required, should be neatly executed and, if necessary, followed by a matte finish coat of paint. Painting should maintain the general color of the natural masonry and must not be completed in bright or unusual shades.

Front steps should not be removed or rebuilt in any material other than that of the original stone masonry or a modern substitute of similar color and textural quality. Brick or wooden risers or treads are not characteristic of Back Bay construction.

AWNINGS AND CANOPIES Because of the comfort and protection from inclement weather that they provide, awnings and canopies have traditionally been used in urban residential areas. Awnings and canopies, however, are not generally recommended for the Back Bay town house, for they tend to conceal both the design of the entry and its richly detailed doorway. Canopies are particularly awkward in form when fitted to a raised entry, and, therefore, are unsuitable for use on many buildings in the Residential District.

There are, however, several instances in which awnings and canopies can provide an attractive addition to the buildings and immediate neighborhood. Canopies, for example, can be quite effective when installed on larger apartment buildings, especially those with grade or below grade entrances, and are also appropriate in front of restaurants and shops. Heavy canvas, recommended for all awnings and canopies, should be replaced whenever weathered or faded. Suggested canvas colors include buff-brown, light grey, ochre, brick red, grey-green, and medium blue. Awnings or canopies may not be disfigured by large or garish lettering. Aluminum or plastic canopies and awnings will not be permitted in the Residential District.



24 Marlborough Street.



20 Marlborough Street.



347 Beacon Street.



303 Commonwealth Avenue.



WINDOWS



287 Commonwealth Avenue.

Back Bay windows are long and graceful openings usually emphasized by carved stone enframements or ornamental brick or stone lintels and sills. Windows vary in form with the architectural style of the building and change in height and proportion with the functional importance of the rooms within. In the Back Bay, windows are almost always double-hung and are generally fitted with large panes of glass. Colonial or multipaned sash are not appropriate to most of the construction in the district and properly belong only to some Federal or Georgian Revival buildings and "medieval" styles. Windows in the district that have been altered through the use of small-paned sash should not be mistaken as part of an original design.

During rehabilitation, window openings should not be enlarged, closed-off, or otherwise altered in form. New sash for windows should be cut to fit curved or irregular openings and should not be reduced for stock sizes or shapes. Picture, strip, sliding aluminum, jalousie, and most casement windows are not appropriate to the architecture of the Back Bay Residential District.

Except in the case of occasional Federal and Georgian Revival buildings, window sash in the district should be dark in color. Acceptable color choices include matte black, slate grey, dark brown, and grey-brown. Wooden window frames should be similar in color to either the surrounding

masonry or the dark movable sash. Matte black, medium greys, grey-browns, and deep reds are most appropriate for wooden window frames in brownstone or brownstone trimmed buildings, while deep shades of grey, brown, and green as well as matte black should be used with red brick. Window frames within light colored stone construction may be painted beige, dove grey, deep blue, forest green, or matte black.

ORIELS The oriel is a projecting window that is attached to the facade of a building, but unlike the bay, does not alter the ground plan of the structure. Oriels are usually encased in metal sheathing, although prior to the restrictive building laws of 1871-1873, wood construction was often left exposed. Many oriels are quite decoratively treated and display complexly formed bases and handsome patterns in pressed metal.

Oriels should not be removed or replaced and should be painted subdued colors like soft browns, bronze greens, medium greys, and matte black. White or bright colors will exaggerate the prominence of oriels on building facades and are, therefore, inappropriate.

STORM WINDOWS Many property owners discover that storm windows are a sound investment. Storm windows, however, produce an undesirable effect of shiny outlined openings that is par-



Oriel windows, 270 Clarendon Street.

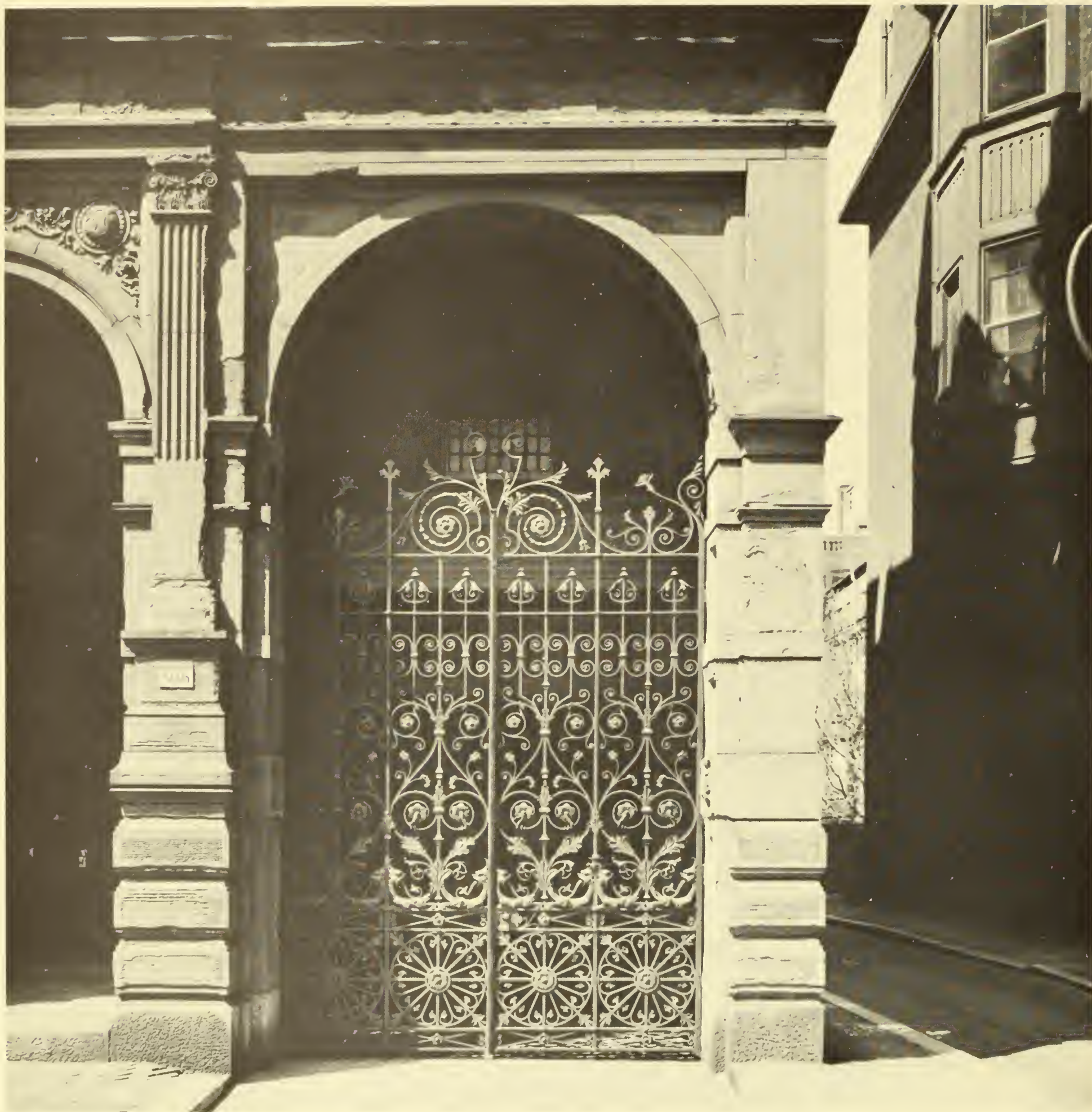
ticularly jarring on brownstone buildings. If storm windows are needed, those which have baked black enamel frames are strongly recommended. The baked enamel frame not only produces an extremely durable surface but provides a storm window that will not compete with the architectural design of the building.

Shiny aluminum windows that have already been installed can be treated by cleaning the exterior surfaces, priming the frame, and applying a coat of good quality black enamel paint. This procedure will insure many years of protection and will require little maintenance. If the aluminum window is less than a year old or has been anodized, and natural weathering has not occurred, the surface of the frames should be prepared with a mild etching acid just prior to priming in order to insure proper paint adhesion.

SHUTTERS For the most part, exterior shutters were only used on Back Bay residences when they were closed for the summer or vacated for extended periods of time. Shutters, therefore, should not be considered as an essential part of the facade of most buildings in the Residential District. The use of shutters on the Back Bay town house can clutter its architectural design and conceal much of its distinctive window detailing. When used, therefore, shutters should be maintained as a relatively inconspicuous feature and painted matte black.



IRONWORK



Archway, 306 Dartmouth Street.

Some of the finest architectural detailing in the Residential District is apparent in the ironwork balconies, door grills, hand-rails, and garden fencing of the Back Bay town house. The ironwork of the area is primarily ornamental in nature and is used to enrich the decorative texture of a building and enhance its architectural form.

French Second Empire ironwork is formal in design with repetitive hoop-like forms and classical balusters predominating. By the late 1870's, and during the following decades, ironwork tends to become more exuberant in form as floral and foliate patterns appear in fences, gateways, and balconies. At the turn of the century, ironwork ornament is characterized by fences and door grills of tall spear-like members.

GARDEN FENCES The front gardens of the Back Bay Residential District are enclosed either by sturdy brownstone fences or, more usually, by low masonry curbs ornamented with cast or wrought iron railings. Most iron fences are approximately two to three feet high, but those erected in the early twentieth century vary between five and seven feet. Much of the existing older iron fencing of the area has survived in good condition and still provides an effective complement to the continuity of Back Bay thoroughfares. Brownstone fences, unfortunately, have suffered more abuse and should be repaired and restored whenever possible.

Retention of original stone or ironwork fencing is strongly recommended. Iron fences should be periodically reinforced and painted black. Missing parts can often be replaced with new members of similar or related design. Some property owners have eliminated gaps in iron fences by taking them apart and respacing existing balusters. This very satisfactory solution repairs and restores original ironwork and costs no more than replacement of the old fence with a new one.

The choice for fencing where it does not exist should be limited to the selection of suitable ironwork. For row houses, short two-to-three foot fences of plain or classically detailed balusters are most appro-



Iron fencing, 77-83 Marlborough Street.



Doorway and fencing, 130 Commonwealth Avenue.



Windows and balconies, 32 Hereford Street.

priate. Antique railings may be located in salvage yards, but many suitable iron fences may be purchased through manufacturers or local contractors.

Inappropriate to the architectural character of the Back Bay are wooden, chain-link, aluminum, plastic panelled, concrete block or wire fences.

HANDRAILS Original iron or stone masonry handrails, as functional and decorative elements associated with the entrance of the Back Bay town house, should not be removed unless they are beyond repair. If installation of handrails is necessary for safety purposes, old ironwork from salvage yards can provide relatively inexpensive and attractive alternatives. New railings, when preferred, should be dark in color, simple in design, and sturdy in appearance. Aluminum, industrial, and metal or plastic panelled handrails are inappropriate.

BALCONIES Ironwork balconies and

window grills were designed as luxurious accents to the architectural design of the Back Bay residence and as embellishments that were particularly effective when used with light colored stone masonry. Although apparent in earlier architectural styles in the Back Bay, the use of elegantly detailed balconies becomes most popular with the onset of Classical and Renaissance Revivals. The Italian Renaissance inspired Andrews Mansion at 32 Hereford Street, for example, was not only adorned with several handsome contemporary examples, but was distinguished as well by a prominently placed antique balcony salvaged from the Tuileries Palace in Paris. Balconies and window grills require little maintenance and should be painted black.

FIRE ESCAPES Fire escapes are very conspicuous features and, as a rule, should be placed on the alley wall of a building. If installation on street facades is required, fire escapes should be designed and constructed with the same attention de-

manded by other major alterations or repairs.

The most appropriate fire escape system for buildings in the Residential District is a series of connecting horizontal fire balconies that respect the structural arrangement and forms of the building. The construction of fire balconies usually necessitates cooperative agreements between adjacent property owners, but this method has been frequently employed in the area with considerable success.

During installation, fire balconies should be carefully shaped to fit around projecting architectural elements like bay and oriel windows. Most fire balconies will require support and should be cantilevered where possible. If exterior brackets are necessary, these should be placed unobtrusively. Whenever alternative systems are feasible, fire escapes with criss-crossing ladders and platforms will not be permitted on the street facades of any structure in the Residential District. Fire balconies should be black in color.



ROOFS



Detail of cornice, 32 Hereford Street.

The mansard roof is one of the most frequently repeated architectural forms in the Back Bay Residential District. It is the hallmark of the French Second Empire Style and was considered, in its day, a modern and very fashionable design feature. As a steeply pitched roof consisting of a high lower slope pierced by dormers and a barely perceptible flatter upper portion, the mansard provided a full extra floor of living space which, in the Back Bay, functioned primarily as servants' quarters. Mansard roofs were designed to be visible from the street and were covered with slate tiles arranged in decorative patterns.

After 1880, gabled, hipped, and conical roofs became prominent in the district. These roofs are frequently complex in design and are distinguished by protruding towers, ornamented chimney stacks, and tall intricately detailed dormer windows. Slate coverings are most usual, although copper sheathing and terracotta tilings are also apparent.

Whenever possible, the design of visible roof forms including balustrades and ornamented chimneys should be preserved. Slate, copper, or tile facings should be repaired in matching materials, and efforts should be made to retain all other notable roof features.

CORNICES The main cornice of the Back Bay town house is constructed of wood, stone, brick, terracotta, or pressed metal. Cornices are often elaborately ornamented and reflect in form and detailing specific architectural styles. Cornice lines emphasize the horizontal continuity of the avenues of the Residential District and provide strong visual terminations to building facades.

Most cornices in the District will remain in sound condition with little maintenance. Wooden, metal-covered, or brownstone cornices, however, require regular attention and should be periodically repaired and painted the color of the original masonry or masonry trim.



Unless repair is completely unfeasible, original cornices should not be removed from Back Bay buildings. If removal of all or part of a cornice should become necessary, a suitably designed substitute should be erected in its place.

PENTHOUSES Although the penthouse is not a traditional nineteenth century architectural feature, if thoughtfully designed and suitably placed, can exist unobtrusively in the Residential District. Penthouses are least conspicuous on taller apartment buildings or on mansarded or flat roofed row houses. Penthouses should not be proposed for buildings distinguished by complexly arranged roof forms and, because of the visual prominence of the site, should not be placed on older buildings occupying corner lots.

In the design of any penthouse, visibility from the street and integration within the form of the present roof are important factors. One method of reducing the visibility of a penthouse from ground level is to set it back from the edge of the street facade, limit it to a single story in height (*approximately 9½ foot maximum*), and constructed it to slope away from the front of the building. Penthouses can also be successfully added to older structures by designing them as extensions of an existing high mansard roof.

Building materials for penthouses should relate in surface texture and color to the older roofing of the area. Slate tiles and copper flashing are usually most appropriate. Aluminum or vinyl siding, clapboards, wood or asphalt shingles, synthetic brick or stone, or any coverings that do not match or complement traditional roofing are not acceptable for penthouse construction.

Penthouse openings must be aligned with those of the building facade and should correspond to them in proportion, pattern of organization, type and size. Strip, jalousie, picture, or colonial-style windows are not appropriate. Fire exits and fire balconies should be restricted to the alley side of the building. Awnings and cano-



Detail from Panorama of Back Bay, circa 1910

pies should be concealed from general view, and deck or patio areas reserved for the rear portions of the house.

DORMER WINDOWS Dormer windows are not usually prominent architectural features. However, on some of the more picturesque examples of the Queen Anne and Chateausque styles, they are both ornate and distinctive.

Dormers should be maintained and repaired with suitable materials. If well related to the forms, proportions, size, and arrangement of existing windows and executed in matching materials and colors, new or additional dormers will be permitted.

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS In the long run, copper gutters are least expen-

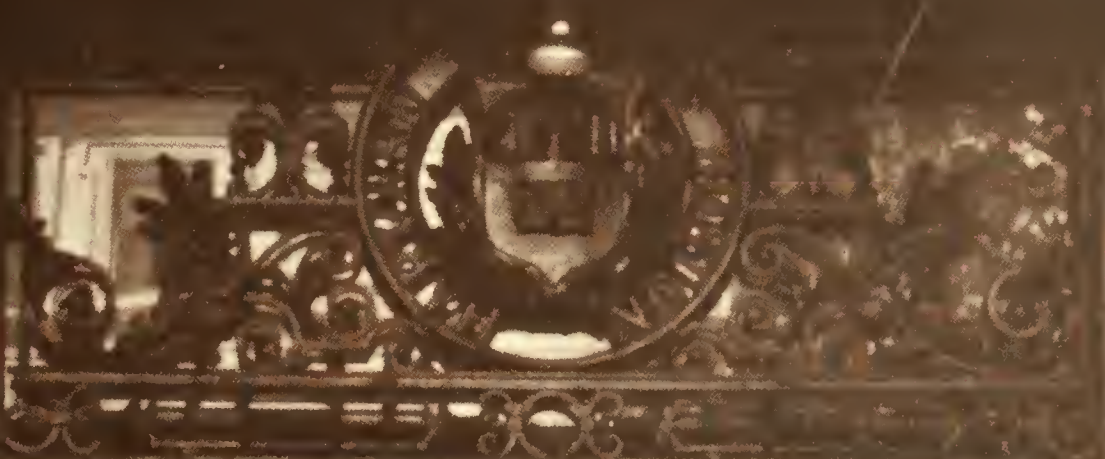
sive and easiest to maintain. They are therefore strongly recommended by the Architectural Commission.

Copper downspouts are suggested both for durability and appearance, and should be allowed to weather naturally. If aluminum or stainless steel pipes are employed, these should be painted bronze green, black, or other dark colors. Whenever older pipes are replaced or mended, decorative copper fittings or gargoyle-like spouts should be preserved.

Although installation on street facades of most Back Bay buildings is necessary, downspouts can be placed inconspicuously, as for example, along the line of the party wall just beyond the projection of a bay or oriel window.

HOUSE OF THE HARVARD CLUB
OF BOSTON • BUILT IN 1913

SIGNS/UTILITY EQUIPMENT



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Detail of entry porch, Hotel Charlesgate, 535 Beacon Street.

SIGNS The earliest signs to appear in the Back Bay Residential District were decoratively treated names of hotels, clubs, and churches that were carved in masonry and conceived as part of the detailing of the facade. Modern signs, if thoughtfully designed and placed, can continue this tradition and provide the area with dignified and attractive contemporary ornament.

The purposes for which signs may be used are strictly regulated by the zoning code. Sign proposals for the Residential District must not only satisfy these restrictions but must also be of appropriate design. All aspects of any sign proposal in the Back Bay Residential District including but not limited to size, placement, illumination, content and materials will be reviewed and considered by the Commission.

In the H *apartment* zoning district, which comprises most of the Back Bay Residential District, signs describing functions and activities occurring within a building may not be larger than two square feet in area. Proposed signs for the apartment district must not project from the building's sur-

face and should be placed below the floor line of the second story. Neon or back-lighted signs will not be allowed in the apartment zoning district.

The use of rooted or free-standing signs within the apartment zoning district is discouraged except in connection with church or other institutional uses. However, in the district along and adjacent to Massachusetts Avenue which is zoned for local business, free-standing signs may be appropriate in specific instances. Billboards, flashing, or animated signs will not be permitted in either the apartment or local business zoning districts of the Back Bay Residential District.

Before any sign proposal is developed, property owners should seek the advice of a professional graphics designer. Signs in the Back Bay Residential District should be formal in design and characterized by dignified type face, restrained ornament and color, and simplicity of general shape. Several property owners have substituted rows of brass or bronze letters for more usual sign types. If carefully handled, this sign treatment is both handsome and impressive in effect.

UTILITY EQUIPMENT Installation of utility equipment on the exterior of any building in the Residential District should be restricted so far as possible to the alley side of the building or portions of the roof that are not visible from the street. Whenever possible, duplication of individual utility units should be avoided through the design of master systems. Television antennae, for example, should not clutter roof-tops, and master aerials to which all users can be inconspicuously attached should be developed for all buildings that have been or will be renovated. Antennae should be set as far back from the edge of the street facade as reception quality will permit, and cables should be placed at the rear of the building.

During building construction or rehabilitation, it is most desirable that central air conditioning systems be installed. Individual air conditioners on street facades are strongly discouraged. If no other placement is feasible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and should be dark or grey in color.



LANDSCAPING

The small gardens that line the long streets and avenues of the Residential District are an integral part of the Back Bay landscaping scheme. The condition and design of these gardens have a significant effect on the appearance of the area as a whole, and property owners who plant and maintain them contribute substantially to the general enhancement of the District. Although Back Bay gardens are fairly uniform in design and dimension, many different kinds of landscape treatment are suitable. The following recommendations should not therefore be considered as exhaustive.

Existing alignments of Back Bay gardens must not be altered, and, unless irreparable, original ironwork or stone masonry fences and curbing should not be replaced. Where fencing does not exist, an excellent substitute can be provided by clipped green hedges. Hedges that do grow well in the city and are suitable to the area include boxwood, privet, bayberry, barberry, and Japanese holly. In order to encourage thick branching and a formal appearance, hedges should be trimmed regularly.

Ground cover for Back Bay gardens should be limited to grasses, vines, and other low and densely growing plants. Vinca, (myrtle), pachysandra, and Baltic ivy minima are good choices, but many other plantings can be used successfully. Although ground cover is preferred, pavings of small regular units like red brick or granite blocks may also be considered by the property owner. Gravel, black-top and concrete surfaces are not acceptable alternatives.

Tree selection for front gardens should be limited to those that will maintain an approximate height of 15-20 feet at maturity. Flowering trees have traditionally been used in the area, and in addition to the magnolia, suggested types include hawthorne, crab-apple, eastern red bud, dogwood, and viburnum. Evergreens are not recommended for the Residential District.



Marlborough Street looking west from Exeter Street.

In addition to flowering trees in front yards, property owners should also concern themselves with trees planted along the sidewalks of the Back Bay. Property owners and residents of the area should see that these trees are watered during periods of drought and are protected against vandalism. Efforts to install street trees either through private initiative or

by request to the city will be supported and encouraged by the Architectural Commission. Recently planted little leaf lindens have been most successful in the area although the horse chestnut, honey locust and Norway maple have also demonstrated that they, too, are remarkably hardy.



306 Dartmouth Street.

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Marlborough Street looking west from 75 Marlborough.

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Detail of Panorama of Back Bay. *c. 1910*
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View of Commonwealth Avenue. 1879
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